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no. 120

United States
Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Alaska Region
Report
Number 120



ALASKA NATIONAL INTEREST LANDS CONSERVATION ACT

How the Alaska Lands Act Affects Forest Service Programs In Alaska





THE ACT AND FOREST SERVICE PROGRAMS

National Forest lands and Forest Service programs in Alaska, administered by the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, are affected in a variety of ways by the Alaska Lands Act (known formally as the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act).

The Act affects programs of the National Forest System, as well as cooperative forestry efforts of the Forest Service State and Private Forestry organization and activities of the Forest Service Research organization.

Following is a summary of provisions in the Alaska Lands Act regarding lands and programs in Alaska administered by the Forest Service.

STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY

State and Private Forestry programs of the Forest Service are directly affected by a number of special provisions in the Act and through emphasis on increasing the yield of wood products through cooperative efforts with the State Forester and private forest land owners.

Cooperative forestry and related resource programs are underway and have involved a number of Alaska Native villages and corporations in all forested regions of Alaska. Activity in these programs is expected to increase as a result of the Act.

Chugach Region Study

The Alaska Lands Act specifically directs the completion of a Chugach Region Study within one year--that is, by December 1981. The Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture, along with the Alaska Land Use Council; the Chugach Natives, Inc.; and the State of Alaska, will study land ownership and use patterns in the Chugach Region.

The study objectives are to identify lands that can be made available for conveyance to Chugach Natives, Inc., in keeping with the intent and purpose of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and to improve the boundaries of conservation units. The one-year study will involve affected communities and will include public hearings.

The results of the study will be transmitted to the President who will in turn report to Congress along with any proposed legislation to implement study recommendations.

The Alaska Lands Act provides other opportunities for coordination of activities. Resource inventories are of vital importance to the successful implementation of this Act. Oil, gas, and other energy resource surveys; mineral exploration; and renewable resource surveys are essential to the development of land management plans which can make the United States more independent of foreign energy, minerals, and other resources. Forest Service inventories of Alaska's forests and related renewable resources will be coordinated with State and other agency surveys.

The Alaska Lands Act also provides for the establishment of an Alaska Lands Bank. Management agreements involving forest lands can be developed under these provisions of the act.

RESEARCH

Forest Service research programs are directly affected through a number of studies directed by the Alaska Lands Act.

The Act mandates more intensive forest practices in Alaska that will yield more timber including increased volume from so-called marginal forest stands. The technology for maintaining or increasing timber production, while protecting the environment, wildlife, and other resources will be strengthened.

Research will be concentrated in two general areas: 1) intensive timber management and utilization, and 2) environmental protection. Studies will explore methods to improve growth and yield by thinning and other cultural management practices, improve timber harvest equipment and technology for use in southeast Alaska terrain, and intensify timber utilization. Studies will also be done to determine costs and benefits of different timber management practices. In connection with timber harvest, additional studies will determine how to protect and enhance production of anadromous fish, protect wildlife habitat, minimize impacts on soil and water, and maintain scenic values.

Most of the research in fiscal year 1981 will be done through cooperative studies with Universities and other contractors.

COOPERATIVE STUDIES

The Act prescribes a number of cooperative studies and plans. In several of these, specific cooperators have been named. In such studies, the Forest Service will follow established land management planning procedures for public involvement. Cooperators will include other Federal agencies, State agencies, communities, Native corporations and villages, and private groups. Involvement of the general public will be elicited. The Alaska Land Use Council will also be involved in these studies.

A cross-section of resource issues will be studied:

- o Mining and fisheries, cooperative fisheries, aquaculture;
- o Operational plans for mining and mining access within some wilderness areas;
- o Wilderness study, opportunities to increase timber yields, monitoring of timber supply and demand in southeast Alaska;
- o Canadian-Alaska access, coordinated land ownership;
- o Wild and scenic rivers;
- o Oil and gas leasing potential.

ALASKA'S NATIONAL FORESTS

In accord with the various laws governing the administration of National Forests, such forests are managed for multiple use. The various resources are managed in the configuration that best meets the needs of the American people. (Regulations governing resident fish and wildlife species, including hunting, fishing, and trapping regulations on the National Forests, are developed and administered by the State.)

The Alaska Lands Act, together with earlier laws governing the administration of the National Forests, provide for comprehensive planning. This planning is coordinated with State and local community planning efforts. The Tongass National Forest Land Management Plan (TLMP), developed during the 1977-79 period, was utilized in the development of the Alaska Lands Bill. In accordance with the legislative history (Congressional Record, August 19, 1980), TLMP will be modified to reflect the land use designations and other changes prescribed by the Act. The Forest Service's Alaska Regional Plan and Chugach National Forest Plan, which are now being prepared, will also reflect direction in the Alaska Lands Act. The State, local communities, and the public will be involved in all of these planning efforts.

ADDITIONS AND LAND ADJUSTMENTS TO NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Four areas totaling 1,900,000 acres are added to the Chugach National Forest by the Act; Nellie Juan, College Fiord, Copper/Rude River, and Controller Bay.

Three areas totaling 1,450,000 acres are added to the Tongass National Forest; Kates Needle, Juneau Icefield, and Brabazon Range.

Alaska Region, National Forest System

	<u>Tongass N.F.</u>	<u>Chugach N.F.</u>
Total acreage before act	15,555,388 Acres Net	4,392,646 Acres Net
Total acreage after act	17,005,388 Acres Net*	6,292,646 Acres Net*
Wilderness acreage created	5,361,899 Acres**	None Created
Wilderness Study	None Created	2,019,000 Acres
Wild and Scenic River Study	Situk River***	None Created

* This net total includes 57,000 acres that were deleted from the Tongass National Forest and 97,000 acres that were deleted from the Chugach National Forest. The Act also provides for additional transfers of National Forest land to Native Corporations, the State, and the Fish and Wildlife Service of an estimated 296,000 acres on Afognak Island and an estimated 242,000 acres to the Chugach Native Corporation.

** Final acreage may vary from these figures as official boundary maps are completed.

*** The Act provides for a maximum of 640 acres on each side of the river, for each mile of river length.

WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

As on all National Forests throughout the United States, the State has the primary authority for management of resident fish and wildlife species and prescribing hunting, fishing, and trapping regulations.

Commercial and Sport Fishing

Boundaries, seasons, and limits for commercial and sport fishing in National Forest areas were not affected by the Act. Commercial and sport fishing regulations will continue to be administered by the State.

Fish Habitat Enhancement

Forest Service fisheries enhancement programs, in cooperation with the State, will continue. The Act provides for fishery research, management, enhancement, rehabilitation activities, and hatcheries within National Forest Wildernesses and Wilderness Study Areas designated by the Act.

NATIONAL FOREST TIMBER SUPPLY AND HARVEST

The Act directs the Forest Service to maintain a timber supply of 4.5 billion board feet per decade on the Tongass National Forest. Timber yield on the Chugach National Forest will be determined with the development of the Chugach Forest Plan.

The Act requires a series of reports to Congress on (1) the status of timber harvest levels in the Tongass National Forest since enactment; (2) the impact of Wilderness designation on the timber, fishing, and tourism industries in southeast Alaska; (3) measures instituted by the Forest Service to protect fish and wildlife; and (4) the status of the Small Business Set Aside Program on the Tongass National Forest.

The studies required for these reports will be conducted in cooperation and consultation with the State, affected Native corporations, the southeast Alaska timber industry, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, and the Alaska Land Use Council. An annual report will be submitted to the Senate's Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the House of Representative's Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

The Act authorizes that a special loan program be established for purchasers of National Forest wood products to help them acquire equipment and to develop new technology for using wood products. This program is designed to encourage the utilization of marginal supplies of timber. A fund of 5 million dollars will be established for these loans.

STRUCTURES AND FACILITIES UNDER SPECIAL USE PERMIT AND/OR PUBLIC USE

Existing special use permits and leases on all National Forest lands for cabins, homesites, or similar structures will continue with some limitations on conveyance or transfer in Wilderness areas. Existing uses of temporary campsites, shelters, and other temporary facilities and equipment related to hunting and fishing will continue.

Existing public use cabins within Wildernesses designated by the Act will be maintained and, when necessary, replaced. A limited number of new public use cabins and shelters in Wilderness areas may be constructed for public safety.

NEW WILDERNESS

The "Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act" established the following National Forest Wilderness areas:

<u>Wilderness</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Admiralty Island National Monument Wilderness.....	900,000
Coronation Island Wilderness.....	19,122
Endicott River Wilderness.....	94,000
Maurelle Islands Wilderness.....	4,424
Misty Fiords National Monument Wilderness.....	2,136,000
Petersburg Creek -	
Duncan Salt Chuck Wilderness.....	50,000
Russell Fiord Wilderness.....	307,000
South Baranof Wilderness.....	314,000
South Prince of Wales Wilderness.....	97,000
Stikine - LeConte Wilderness.....	443,000
Tebenkof Bay Wilderness.....	65,000
Tracy Arm - Fords Terror Wilderness.....	656,000
Warren Island Wilderness.....	11,353
West Chichagof - Yakobi Wilderness.....	<u>265,000</u>
TOTAL ACREAGE.....	5,361,899*

*The final acreage of Wilderness areas may vary from these figures as official boundary maps are completed and State and Native selection acreages are deleted from these totals.

The Act allows until December 2, 1983, for the completion of the study of the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area on the Chugach National Forest. The study will involve the public and may result in recommending all or part of the Study Area for Wilderness designation. Until the study is complete and Congress has acted on the recommendations, the Study Area will be managed to protect its wilderness quality.

The Wilderness areas will be managed as directed by the 1964 Wilderness Act as amended by Alaska Lands Act. The primary objective of a Wilderness area is to maintain the Wilderness character of the land. However, the Alaska Lands Act specifically authorizes the following uses for Alaska Wilderness areas:

1. Fishing, Hunting & Trapping
Fishing, hunting, and trapping will continue as on other National Forest land. They are subject to State fish and game regulations.
2. Subsistence
Subsistence uses, including sport hunting and fishing, will be given special attention on all National Forest lands including Wilderness. The State of Alaska prescribes hunting, fishing, and trapping regulations.

3. Public Recreation Cabins

Existing Public Recreation Cabins will continue to be maintained and may be replaced as needed. A limited number of new public cabins may be added if needed for health and safety reasons.

4. Structures & Facilities Under Special Use Permit and/or Public Use

Existing special use permits and leases on all National Forest lands for cabins, homesites, or similar structures will continue. Use of temporary campsites, shelters, and other temporary facilities and equipment related to hunting and fishing will continue.

5. Fish Habitat Enhancement

Fishery research, management, enhancement, and rehabilitation activities are permitted within National Forest Wildernesses and Wilderness Study Areas designated by the Act. This includes permanent improvements such as fishways, weirs, hatcheries, spawning channels, stream clearance, egg planting, and other accepted means of maintaining, enhancing, and rehabilitating fish stocks. In Wilderness, structures will be constructed in a rustic manner to minimize impact on the wilderness character of the area. Reasonable access, including temporary uses of motorized equipment, will be permitted. Fish hatchery and related aquaculture projects are jointly renewed and approved by the State of Alaska and the Forest Service.

6. Special Use Permits for Guides and Outfitters

Existing guides and outfitters may continue to offer services within the Wilderness Areas under special use permits as on other National Forest lands.

7. Private, State, and Native Lands

Private, State, and Native lands within a Wilderness are not affected by this Act and access to these properties is assured.

8. Use of Airplanes, Motorboats, and Snow Machines

Existing use of airplanes, motorboats, and snow machines will continue and can only be restricted or prohibited after public hearings.

9. Timber

Timber may not be sold or harvested from Wilderness lands. Beach log salvage is permitted along saltwater shorelines. Timber may be used for campfires, trail construction, and to fulfill subsistence needs of local residents.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

The Situk River near Yakutat on the Tongass National Forest is designated for study as a potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System. The Forest Service will conduct a study of the river by September 30, 1984, to determine whether it should be included in the National System. The Forest Service will solicit advice from the public and other agencies in preparing this study.

During the study period, all public lands within an area extending 2 miles from the banks of both sides of the river are withdrawn under this Act, from mining, entry, sale, State selection, or other disposition under the Public Land Laws, except for valid existing rights.

PROSPECTING & MINING IN NATIONAL FOREST WILDERNESS AREAS AND MONUMENTS

The prospecting for and development of mineral resources are long established uses on National Forests. A number of restrictions on such use apply to designated Wilderness areas. National Monuments are closed to further mineral entry, but valid claims remain.

The Wilderness Act permits exploration for mineral deposits until December 31, 1983. Mining claims determined to be valid as of December 31, 1983, can be developed. Mining claims located in these Wilderness Areas prior to establishment by the Act include both the land surface and the minerals beneath the surface.

Although National Monuments are closed to mineral entry, the Alaska Lands Act provides for mineral development in specific portions of both Misty Fiords and Admiralty Island National Monuments. These provisions accomodate proposed mining development by U.S. Borax and Chemical Corporation at Quartz Hill in the Misty Fiord National Monument and the Pan Sound Venture at Greens Creek in the Admiralty Island National Monument.

Although the lands in the area of both Quartz Hill and Greens Creek are withdrawn from entry, the Act makes provisions for continued prospecting on lands within 3/4 of a mile of valid claims. This will permit some expansion of both operations should additional valuable deposits be located adjacent to the valid claims.

The new legislation prohibits new mining claims in the Copper/Rude River addition to the Chugach National Forest. However, mineral removal on existing claims will be allowed under reasonable regulations.

DEVELOPMENT OF REGULATIONS

The Alaska Lands Act will require the development of various regulations to implement specific provisions of the Act. The State of Alaska, local communities, public and private organizations, and individuals will be involved in the development of these regulations involving Forest Service programs in Alaska.

Further information on the Alaska Lands Act as it affects Forest Service programs and activities may be obtained by contacting any Forest Service office in the State.

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